



PERSPECTIVES FOR THE EDUCATIONAL COUNSELING AND THE SOLUTION-FOCUSED BRIEF THERAPY IN JAPAN

Kyung-Ran Yu

(321-3295) Graduate School of Psychology, Sakushin Gakuin Univ., Takeshitamachi 908, Utsuhomiya-shi, Tochigi, Japan

ABSTRACT

There are increasing social needs of the educational counseling in Japan, concerning the futures of the school-aged students. A government document by Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology in 2007 clearly conveys that the problems that students are facing are (including mental health ones) becoming more complex these days. Given the grave situation in schools, Japan is now taking a two-way approach to have school teachers and school counselors work together. Despite that, the strategical approaches in the educational counseling lack in Japan. In this article, the introduction of the evidence-based "solution-focused brief therapy" (SFBT) in the educational counseling is discussed, which would be helpful in treating the students' diverse problems effectually. Although the SFBT has been introduced into Japan since the 1980s, the SFBT-related perspectives in the educational counseling still remain small in the literature. The design of the educational counseling training programs for the school teachers with the SFBT techniques will be of interest in the future.

KEYWORDS: educational counseling, solution-focused brief therapy, Japan.

Hard-to-grasp Educational Counseling:

The clinico-psychological term "educational counseling" (or some similar words like "school counseling", "educational guidance", and "student counseling") has suffered from the ambiguity of its definition even for the long history through the last half of the 20th century. It was the first-ever definition of "educational counseling" that was given in APA Dictionary of Psychology in 2007 (VandenBos, 2007, p. 314): "the counseling specialty concerned with providing advice and assistance to students in the development of their educational plans, choice of appropriate courses, and choice of college or technical school. Counseling may also be applied to improve study skills or provide assistance with school-related problems that interfere with performance (e.g., learning disabilities). Educational counseling is closely associated with vocational counseling because of the relationship between educational training and occupational choice".

This lengthy definition of "educational counseling" can be taken as an allusion to the burdensome duties loaded on counsellors in the field, which is spoken of by Boyer (1988, p. 3): "School counselors are expected to do what our communities, our homes, and our churches have not been able to accomplish, and if they cannot, we condemn them for failing to fulfill our high minded expectations". Other relevant literature also mentioned the lack of systematic and theoretical approaches to, the lack of the strict definition for, and diverse perspectives (not in consensus) to educational counseling (e.g., Drury, 1984, Gysbers & Henderson, 2000; Hart & Jacobi, 1992). That being said, the national survey in the US showed some agreements among school counselors that the national standards for the school counseling "would provide the mechanism for school counseling to be accepted as a legitimate component of the educational system", "could establish similar goals, expectations, support systems, and experiences for all students as a result of participation in school counseling programs", and "would help to define the vision and goals for the school counseling for the 21st century" (Dahir, 2004). To recapitulate, their responses can be regarded as the educational counseling being fully authorized (immersed in schools) and leaving no student behind towards the future; in other words, it is desirable that the educational counseling, being empowered in the educational system, prepare for the future of every student and the counseling system itself.

Educational Counseling in Japan:

In Japan, the necessity of the educational counseling has been raised in the similar context that the future of the next generation would be devastated without a special care to the growing students. The impending social need for the educational counseling was well-described by a document of Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) in 2007, that is, Jidōseitono kyōikusōdanno Jyūjitsunitsuite: Ikikitosita Kodomowo Sōdatteru Sōdantaiseizukuri (For the Enhancement of Educational Counseling of Students: The Creation of Consultation System to Nurture a Lively Children Creation; MEXT, 2007). The document reflected the stressful situation surrounding school-aged children then, which is still ongoing nowadays. According to MEXT (2007), the most severe symptoms for students are the lost human communication and human relationships due to the declining capacity of a local community, the widespread use of mobile phones, and the decline in educational and nurturing abilities in a family, reflected by, for example, the aggravated child abuse cases. MEXT (2007) continues to note that the relevant backgrounds for the problems that the educational system should consider is given as the major

changes in modern society such as advanced information technology, urbanization, declining birthrate, aging population, nuclear-familiarization, and the increase in the number of double-income couples, all of which weaken the educational functions of families and local communities. The ultimate concern of MEXT (2007) was clearly conveyed; "unless resolved properly, the problems may cause an irreversible situation that will affect a student's life afterwards".

MEXT (2007), in order to make clear what specific problems the school teachers were facing in terms of the educational counseling, conducted a survey with elementary, junior high, and high school teachers in Japan (the sample sizes are given as N = 1337, 1332, and 1378, respectively). 32.2%, 54.6%, and 35.5% for the three groups agreed that "students' mental health problems are becoming more complex and diversified, making it difficult to understand". Also, 19.4%, 36.8%, and 18.1% did that "many children have mental health problems, and it is difficult to have responsive time". Taking students with complex mind problems and teachers being busy in doing other duties, Japan has had a two-way approach. One is to assign clinical psychologists (or, "mind experts") as school counselors, which started nationwide with 154 schools in 1995, and the other is to have the school teachers be aware of the mental health issues of their students and be trained for the educational counseling (MEXT, 2017). Then, to drive the cooperative works between the school counselors and the school teachers, it is of use to display what the school counselors, as a generator of the functionality in school, should do. In the sense, MEXT (2017) stated the seven expected major roles of a school counselor: (i) consultation/advice for children, (ii) consultation for parents and faculty members in regard to how to do counseling and consultation, (iii) participation in school meetings, (iv) training and giving lectures for faculty members and students, (v) psychological responses to a counselor, (vi) preventive action against stress (such as stress check and stress management), and (vii) emergency mental care for victims in incidents/accidents.

Based on the above literature in the US and Japan, some points related to the educational counseling can be drawn as; (i) the school-aged students are facing various problems including mental health ones, (ii) owing to a large amount of the problems they have, the society as a third party (especially, the government and any other policy maker) is apprehensive of what if the problems were not treated properly, or the loss of their futures, (iii) the apprehension makes an appeal for the necessity of educational counseling led by school counselors, (iv) so far as the diversity of the students' problems goes, the duties regarding the educational counseling become also complicated, and it is hard to find the systematical thinking of the educational counseling, and (v) particularly in Japan, the educational counseling is loaded on the school teachers as well, which should be trained by the experts, i.e., school counselors that have clinic-psychological perspectives to the mind health problems.

Solution-focused Brief Therapy:

For the heaviness, qualitative and quantitative both, of the duties upon school teachers and school counselors is proportional to that of the problems upon students, the resolving power of the educational counseling should be organized "strategically". Here, one may have a question; how can the problems be assessed and solved most effectively? When the methodology is discussed, the educational counseling would be as strong as expected.

Here, the "solution-focused brief therapy" (SFBT) can be an excellent sugges-

tion for the powerful educational counseling. Since the 1980s, there has been a growing attention to the SFBT in the counseling field for its strategy-based nature and the simplicity (Kim, 2014). The SFBT has been developed, in the early 1980s, mainly by Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg in Brief Family Therapy Center (BFTC) located at Milwaukee in the US (Berg, 1994; Berg & de Jong, 1996; Berg & Miller, 1992; Cade & O'Hanlon, 1993; de Shazer, 1988; Kim, 2014; Lipchik, 2002; Murphy, 1996). Influenced by the "brief" counseling techniques discussed by Brief Therapy Center of Mental Research Institute in the 1970s, the BFTC research group was in sought of more effectual ways to reduce the number of sessions towards the solutions as discussing over the in-situ therapy observed through a one-way mirror (de Shazer, 1985; Kim, 2014).

The essence of the SFBT is given by the motto "do something different", which helps clients to bring about a new idea, develop an alternative to the problem, reinterpret the situation they are facing, or create actions towards a new direction (Fitzpatrick & Stalikas, 2008). Kim (2014) noted that the SFBT, formalized by de Shazer and Berg, has four characters: (i) a therapist should throw miracle questions, that is, questions that ask what if the problems were now gone or solved magically, (ii) the therapist should throw scaling questions, that is, questions that measure quantitatively the feeling of clients or how far the problems are felt solved, (iii) the therapist must have a break after the interview, and (iv) the therapist should give a compliment to the client after the break, which acknowledges the client's effort towards solving the problem, and sometimes a suggestion or an assignment as well. In the SFBT, making a virtuous circle in which the client can find the solution by oneself is focused on instead of finding the cause of the problems or getting the problems solved by the therapist.

The SFBT has been evidence-based since its origin, and it has represented the statistically-significant effect sizes for solving the various kinds of mind problems (Gingerich, Kim, & MacDonald, 2012; Kim & Franklin, 2009; Kim et al., 2019; Trepper & Franklin, 2012). Given the evidences for counseling school-aged children, the SFBT is also plausible in the field of the educational counseling. The effectiveness of the SFBT for the elementary students were shown by, for example, Springer et al. (2000). For middle school students, one can refer to Franklin et al. (2001), Newsome (2004), and Franklin et al. (2008). For high school students, one can refer to Franklin and Gerlach (2007). The literature covers the students' mind problems related to self-esteem, attendance, credit earned, etc. In Taiwan and China, Gong and Hsu (2017) performed a meta-analysis that revealed the effectiveness of the SFBT in solving the students' problems for all school levels.

In Japan, the SFBT has been introduced in the 1980s by Prof. Ono, Naohiro and Prof. Keizo, Hasegawa. Tankichiryō Manabu Kai (The Meeting to Learn Brief Therapy) was initiated by then, in which the SFBT community in Japan originated. In 2007, The SFBT community has launched an association Nihon Brief Therapy Kyokai (National Foundation on Brief Therapy), of which the main purpose is to "foster human resources who have theory, epistemology, and therapy techniques, and most importantly, can unravel the complicated interpersonal systems by applying the above bases" (NFBT, 2007).

Educational Counseling and SFBT in Japan:

However, the active adoption of the SFBT in the educational counseling has rarely been reported in Japan. Since Prof. Mori, Toshio published a book on how school teachers can exert the SFBT, that is, Senseino Tameno Yasashii Brief Therapy (Easy Brief Therapy for Teachers) in 2000 (Mori, 2000), there have been only a few reports for bold attempts to view the educational counseling from the SFBT perspective. One literature example is a book Jireide Manabu Seitōshidō, Shinrosidō, Kyōikusōdan: Tsyugakkō, Kōtōgakkō Hen (Student Guidance, Career Guidance, Educational Consultation Learned From Case Studies: Junior High School and High School) edited by the Hasegawa group (Hasegawa et al., 2017). The book covers various case studies in the educational counseling and shows how the problems can be resolved with the SFBT approach. Another is given in a recent noteworthy doctor dissertation Kaiketsushikō Tankichiryōno Kōkani Kansuru Kenkyū: Self-care Tool No Kaihatsu (A Study on the Effectiveness of the Solution-focused Brief Therapy: The Development of Self-care Tools) by Dr. Takagi, Gen in the Wakashima group, Tohoku Univ., in 2020, where he explored in what aspects the SFBT may contribute to the educational counseling (Takagi, 2020). There are no other available works focusing on the educational counseling from the SFBT perspective to the best of the author's knowledge.

Despite that, it is gladly noted that some members of the SFBT community in Japan including the author have started the introduction of the SFBT in the school teachers' training program. As aforementioned, the teacher training programs, some parts of which are designed by the mind experts, is now a stream in the light of the educational counseling. Here, how to measure the effectiveness of the SFBT training will be of interest as the future issue, where the Solution Building Inventory scale would be beneficial (Smock et al., 2010; Takagi et al., 2019). We are looking forward to the next chance soon over our activity to effectuate the SFBT in the field of the educational counseling in Japan.

REFERENCES:

I. Berg, I.K. (1994). *Family Based Services: A Solution-focused Approach*, Norton, New York.

- II. Berg, I.K., & de Jong, P. (1996). *Solution-building Conversation: Co-constructing a Sense of Competence with Clients*. *Families in Society*, 77, p. 376-391.
- III. Berg, I.K., & Miller, S.D. (1992). *Working with the Problem Drinker: A Solution-focused Approach*, Norton, New York.
- IV. Boyer, E.L. (1988). *Exploring the Future: Seeking New Challenges*. *Journal of College Admissions*, 118, p. 2-8.
- V. Cade, B., & O'Hanlon, W.H. (1993). *A Brief Guide to Brief Therapy*, Norton, New York.
- VI. Dahir, C.A. (2004). *Supporting a Nation of Learners: The Role of School Counseling in Educational Reform*. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 82, p. 344-353.
- VII. de Shazer, S. (1985). *Keys to Solution in Brief Therapy*, Norton, New York.
- VIII. de Shazer, S. (1988). *Clues: Investigating Solutions in Brief Therapy*, Norton, New York.
- IX. Drury, S.S. (1984). *Counselor Survival in the 1980s*. *The School Counselor*, 31, p. 234-240.
- X. Fitzpatrick, M.R., & Stalikas, A. (2008). *Positive Emotions as Generators of Therapeutic Change*. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration*, 18, p. 137-154.
- XI. Franklin, C., Biever, J.L., Moore, K.C., Clemons, D., & Scamardo, M. (2001). *The Effectiveness of Solution-focused Therapy with Children in a School Setting*. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 11, p. 411-434.
- XII. Franklin, C., & Gerlach, B. (2007). *Clinical Applications of Solution-focused Brief Therapy in Public Schools*, in: *Handbook of Solution-focused Brief Therapy: Clinical Applications*, Nelson, T.S., Thomas, F.N. (eds.), Haworth Press, Philadelphia, PA, pp. 168-169.
- XIII. Franklin, C., Moore, K., & Hopson, L. (2008). *Effectiveness of Solution-focused Brief Therapy in a School Setting*. *Children & Schools*, 30, p. 15-26.
- XIV. Gingerich, W.J., Kim, J.S., & MacDonald, A.J. (2012). *Solution-focused Brief Therapy Outcome Research*, in: *Solution-focused Brief Therapy: A Handbook of Evidence-based Practice*, Franklin, C., Trepper, T.S., Gingerich, W.J., McCollum E.E. (eds.), Oxford University Press, New York, pp. 95-111.
- XV. Gong, H., & Hsu, W. (2016). *The Effectiveness of Solution-focused Group Therapy in Ethnic Chinese School Settings: A Meta-analysis*. *International Journal of Group Psychotherapy*, 67, p. 383-409.
- XVI. Gysbers, N.C., & Henderson, P. (2000). *Developing and Managing Your School Guidance Program*, 3rd ed., American Counseling Association, Alexandria, VA.
- XVII. Hart, P., & Jacobi, M. (1992). *From Gatekeeper to Advocate: Transforming the Role of the School Counselor*, College Board Press, New York.
- XVIII. Hasegawa, K., Sato, K., & Hanada, R. (Eds.). (2017). *Jireide Manabu Seitōshidō, Shinrosidō, Kyōikusōdan: Tsyugakkō, Kōtōgakkō Hen* [Student Guidance, Career Guidance, Educational Consultation Learned from Case Studies: Junior High School and High School], Tōmi Shōbō, Tokyo.
- XIX. Kim, J.S. (2014). *Solution-focused Brief Therapy and Cultural Competency*, in: *Solution-focused Brief Therapy: A Multicultural Approach*, Kim, J.S. (ed.), Sage, London, pp. 1-13.
- XX. Kim, J.S., & Franklin, C. (2009). *Solution-focused Brief Therapy in Schools: A Review of the Outcome Literature*. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 31, p. 464-470.
- XXI. Kim, J.S., Jordan, S.S., Franklin, C., Froerer, A. (2019). *Is Solution-focused Brief Therapy Evidence-based? An Update 10 Years Later*. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 100, p. 1-12.
- XXII. Lipchik, E. (2002). *Beyond Technique in Solution Focused Therapy*, Norton, New York.
- XXIII. MEXT (2007). *Jidōseitono Kyōikusōdanno Jyūjitsunitsuite: Ikikitosita Kodomowo Sodateru Sōdantaiseizukuri* [For the Enhancement of Educational Counseling of Students: The Creation of Consultation System to Nurture a Lively Children Creation], available at https://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa/shotou/066/gaiyou/1369810.htm, accessed 7 December 2020.
- XXIV. Mori, T. (2000). *Senseino Tameno Yasashii Brief Therapy* [Easy Brief Therapy for Teachers], Honnomori, Tokyo.
- XXV. Murphy, J.J. (1996). *Solution-focused Brief Therapy in the School*, in: *Handbook of Solution-focused Brief Therapy*, Miller, S., Hubble, M., Duncan, B. (eds.), Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, pp. 184-204.
- XXVI. Newsome, S. (2004). *Solution-focused Brief Therapy Groupwork with At-risk Junior High School Students: Enhancing the Bottom-line*. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 14, p. 336-343.
- XXVII. NFBT (2020). *Tōkyōkaini Tsuite* [About This Association], available at <https://brieftherapy-japan.com/about>, accessed 7 December 2020.
- XXVIII. Smock, S.A., McCollum, E., & Stevenson, M. (2010). *The Development of the Solution-focused Inventory*. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, 36, p. 499-510.
- XXIX. Springer, D.W., Lynch, C., & Rubin, A. (2000). *Effects of a Solution-focused Mutual Aid Group for Hispanic Children of Incarcerated Parents*. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal*, 17, p. 431-442.
- XXX. Takagi, G. (2020). *Kaiketsushikō Tankichiryōno Kōkani Kansuru Kenkyū: Self-care Tool No Kaihatsu* [A Study on the Effectiveness of the Solution-focused Brief Therapy: The Development of Self-care Tools], Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan.
- XXXI. Takagi, G., Wakashima, K., Kozuka, T., Yu, K.-R., Sato, K. (2019). *The Develop-*

ment of the Revised Version of Solution Building Inventory Japanese Version. International Journal of Brief Therapy and Family Science, 9, p. 1-7.

- XXXII. Trepper, T.S., & Franklin, C. (2012): The Future of Research in Solution-focused Brief Therapy, in: Solution-focused Brief Therapy: A Handbook of Evidence-based Practice, Franklin, C., Trepper, T.S., Gingerich, W.J., McCollum, E.E. (eds.), Oxford University Press. New York, pp. 405-412.
- XXXIII. VandenBos, G.R. (Ed.). (2007). APA dictionary of psychology, American Psychology Association, Washington, DC.